

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04516 071349Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O 071320Z AUG 78
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4516

EXDIS

ALEXANDRIA FOR SAUNDERS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PEPR LE IS SY
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: VARIOUS NOTES

1. SYRIAN PRESENCE SOUTH OF RED LINE: WE NOTE THAT ISRAELIS CONTINUE TO SPEAK OF SYRIAN TROOPS SOUTH OF THE RED LINE. THE BRITISH MILITARY ATTACHE, WHO WENT TO THE AREA ON SATURDAY, REPORTS THERE ARE TWO SMALL SYRIAN UNITS (HE ESTIMATED ONE AT 12 AND THE OTHER AT 20 MEN, BOTH GROUPS HAVING TWO TRUCKS) A HALF MILE NORTH AND SOUTH OF NABAAT, WHICH IS ABOUT TWO KILOMETERS SOUTH OF KFAR MISHKI. OUR DAO HAS BEEN CARRYING SYRIANS IN THAT VICINITY FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, SO THIS DOES NOT SEEM TO REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT NEW SYRIAN PRESENCE SOUTH OF THE LINE. WE STILL THINK ISRAELI CLAIMS THAT SYRIAN COMPANY ESCORTED FORCE IS FALSE.

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2. SYRIAN PRESSURE: VARIOUS PEOPLE HAVE CLAIMED THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE PUT PRESSURE ON THE LEBANESE TO SEND MEN SOUTH AND TO TAKE THE ROUTE THEY DID (E.G., SOUTOU AT THE QUAI - PARIS 24552). I ASKED BOUTROS ON AUGUST 6 WHETHER THERE HAD IN FACT BEEN SYRIAN PRESSURE ON THEM. HE SAID THERE HAD NOT. IT HAD BEEN AGREED AT LATAKIA THAT THEY WOULD SEND TROOPS SOUTH AND THAT THE SYRIANS

WOULD HELP BY KEEPING THE PALESTINIANS IN LINE. SARKIS EXPLAINED TO ME LAST WEEK THAT THEY HAD TAKEN THE ROUTE THEY DID (WHICH THE LEBANESE HAD HAD IN MIND EVER SINCE THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT) BECAUSE IT WAS EASIER FOR THE SYRIANS TO CONTROL THE PALESTINIANS IN THAT AREA THAN IT WAS TO CONTROL THOSE LOCATED BETWEEN THE ZAHRANI AND THE LITANI AND THROUGH WHOSE TERRITORY THE LEBANESE ARMY WOULD HAVE TO PASS IF IT CHOSE THE COASTAL ROUTE. BRITISH HAVE REPORT SYRIANS INSISTED ON BEKAA ROUTE, BUT IT COMES FROM SOURCE I REGARD AS HYSTERICAL AND AM VERY SKEPTICAL ABOUT IT.

3. INTELLIGENCE FAILURE: BOUTROS HAS ADMITTED TO ME THAT THE LEBANESE HAD MADE A MAMMOTH MISCALCULATION REGARDING HADDAD. I BELIEVE THEY ACTUALLY THOUGHT HE WOULD BUY THE TERMS THEY WERE OFFERING. HAD THEY REALIZED WHAT TROUBLE THEY WOULD ENCOUNTER THEY WOULD NOT HAVE TRIED BY THE BEKAA OR ANY OTHER ROUTE. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THEY ARE SERIOUSLY DISAPPOINTED THAT WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO RESCUE THEM. PERHAPS THIS WILL AT LEAST DISABUSE THEM OF THE NOTION WE ARE OMNIPOTENT.

4. IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO KNOW JUST HOW SERIOUSLY THE ISRAELIS BELIEVE WHAT THEY ARE TELLING US ABOUT SYRIAN PLOTS. THERE IS NO QUESTION, OF COURSE, THAT THE ULTIMATE LEBANESE INTENTION IS TO REOCCUPY SOUTH LEBANON, TAKE
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OVER THE ENCLAVES AND CLOSE THE GOOD FENCE. THIS IS NOT A SYRIAN PLOT, HOWEVER. IT IS A LEBANESE INTENTION TO REASSERT SOVEREIGNTY, AND WOULD APPEAR TO BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INTENTIONS OF RESOLUTION 425. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE ULTIMATE RESULT OF THE SHTAURA ACCORD, IF IT HAD BEEN IMPLEMENTED. DO WE WANT IT OR NOT?
PARKER

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT04516
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS,7 AUG 2008 FMACHAK 25X6
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D780322-0964
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197808124/demeuaaa.tel
Line Count: 101
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 96d6f759-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1589251
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 20010601; <DBA CHANGED> mcm 20010917
Subject: SOUTH LEBANON: VARIOUS NOTES
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, LE, IS, SY
To: STATE TEL AVIV
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/96d6f759-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014